

Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing – February 21, 2017
H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Joseph Dolan, Executive Director
Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton

I am Joseph Dolan and I am the Executive Director of the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton. Our Boys & Girls Club is a member of the Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs along with sixteen other Boys & Girls Clubs who combine to serve over 50,000 youth during out of school time all year long. The Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton serves more than 700 youth in the towns of Redding and Easton, which we have been doing for the past 78 years. On behalf of Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton members and their families, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to express my opposition to H.B. No. 7027 An Act Concerning the STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

I am compelled to testify to **oppose the proposed reduction and consolidation of Neighborhood Youth Center funding** into a pool of funds (Student Support Services) designed to serve far too divergent population groups and needs.

On behalf of the Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton (BGCRE), Board of Directors and our more than 580 registered Club members and 200+ additional youth served throughout the course of the past calendar year, I respectfully ask you our state senators and representatives to **support inclusion of funding for the Neighborhood Youth Center grants which help support the 17 member Connecticut Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs** in the state biannual budget. The BGCRE receives just over about \$30,000 annually from this grant, which is critical to our Club operation. The proposed elimination of this grant program would have a significant impact on the many programming services we provide for the young people in our community.

As background, we ask you to consider the many ways the BGCRE currently serves Redding and Easton town residents. Following is a list of the major programs we ran in 2016:

Sports Programs

Little League Baseball, Spring - 162 players and 15 teams; Summer – 39 players and 3 teams; Fall – 93 players and 8 teams;

Little League Softball, Spring - 100 players and 8 teams; Summer – 36 players and 3 teams; Fall – 37 players and 3 teams;

Challenger Baseball, Spring - 18 players and 12 buddies

Basketball, 100 players and 10 teams;

Field Hockey, 80 players and 3 teams;

Wrestling, 24 wrestlers

Character & Leadership Programs

Keystone Club, 41 active teen members

Torch Club, 47 active teen members

Spelling Bee, 61 elementary school participants and 61 high school mentors

Youth of the Year, 3 participants by nomination

Shoveling for Seniors, 12 teen age participants

Memorial Day Town Wide Picnic, 15 teen age volunteers

In addition, we began offering periodic "Friday Fest" outreach programing for middle school age youth as well as a number of different healthy lifestyle and community service oriented programs.

All of this activity and more is managed by one full time and one part time employee along with numerous citizen volunteers. In addition to running programs, the Club maintains an eight-acre field complex including the only Little League baseball fields in Redding, a basketball court, a clubhouse, a pavilion, a parking lot and long driveway. The expense of maintaining this valuable asset to has become increasingly difficult to spread over the registration cost of our programs even with fundraising activities and the current level of state grant funding. The \$30,000 we received through the NYC grant funding last year represented 25% of our total net funds raised over and above program registration fees. It is difficult for us to imagine how we would replace the NYC grant funding in an environment where we are already asking our members to support our Club in a variety of different fundraising efforts in addition to program fees. Looking forward we ask you our state representatives to recognize the long-standing importance of the Club to our community as a public asset and the need to support it financially.

As you consider this request please know and remember our Mission: "To enable the young people of Redding and Easton, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, and responsible citizens. And to be a positive force for good in the community." Our focus in asking for your support for NYC grant funding is to use the funds to help achieve the mission of serving the youth in our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Joseph Dolan

Executive Director

Boys & Girls Club of Redding-Easton